

SOFTWARE HELP

Turn me into a cartoon

Q I recently bought a cartoon caricature from www.drawme.co.uk and it was brilliant. I want to buy some software that allows me to do the same sort of thing – use a photo of someone and build up a 'cartoon' based on the person's hobbies and suchlike. I can only find cartoon software that takes a photo of a person and changes it. It doesn't let you put in other things.

Debbi, taitait@aol.com

A We don't know of any software that's designed specifically for creating the kind of caricatures you want. Reallusion FaceFilter Studio (*What's New, Shopper* September 2007) can distort faces in amusing ways but the effect is quite different to an illustration-style caricature.

Your best bet is to use an image editor that supports layers. Layers let you overlay different images while still being able to edit each one independently. In this example we used Adobe Photoshop Elements 5.

The first step is to find a headshot photo. Try to choose one without heavy shadows. Open it in Photoshop Elements and cut it out with the lasso tool. Don't worry about being too precise as you'll only be using it as a guide for your caricature. Copy the cut-out head and paste it into a new image file with generous dimensions – perhaps 2,000 by 3,000 pixels.

Next, find other images to use as guides for the props and setting for your illustration. Google Image Search (<http://images.google.co.uk>) is perfect for this. Drag the images directly from Internet Explorer into Photoshop Elements, cut them out and paste them into the image with your headshot. These appear on separate layers, so you can move and resize each independently. If you use Paint Shop Pro, select Paste as Layer rather than the standard Paste command. To change the order of your layers, simply drag them in the Layers palette. Arrange each element to create a satisfying composition. You might want to try Distort filters such as Pinch or Liquify to exaggerate features in a suitably comical style. You should now have a pretty decent caricature made up of a collage of images.

Create a new layer at the top of the stack of existing layers, select the Pencil tool and trace over the outlines of your collage, following any boundaries where there's a change of colour. You might need to adjust the nib size to get a suitably thick line. This job can be quite tricky, so zoom right in, take your time and use fairly short strokes so you can undo any



▲ Transform yourself from ordinary person to super-smooth cartoon character in Photoshop Elements

mistakes without losing too much work. Be careful to close off any gaps in the lines, as this prevents colour fills leaking into the wrong areas.

Select the colour picker at the bottom of the toolbox and click a part of your photo collage to measure its colour. Pick the fill tool and fill the relevant area with that colour. Repeat this process until the entire image is covered in areas of block colour. Alternatively, use textures for areas that warrant it. We used a photo of a leopard to get the leopard-print handkerchief, placing it on a layer behind the drawing and leaving a gap when filling areas. We also duplicated the drawing and blurred the rear layer to give a halo-like glow.

Photoshop's Dodge and Burn tools brighten and darken areas of colour, and are perfect for giving some contours to skin tones and other parts of your image. Select the Magic Wand tool and click an area of block colour to select it (this stops it affecting neighbouring areas). Select the Dodge tool, reduce the Exposure to 10 per cent and adjust the brush size as necessary. Click on the image to lighten areas and Alt-click to darken them. Hide the layer you're working on now and then by clicking the switch in the Layers palette so you can refer back to the original photos.

Once your caricature is complete, save it as a native Photoshop file to keep all the layers in place, and also as a JPEG to generate a flattened image to share with others. **BP**

YOUR EXPERTS

Contact Software Help for software advice and answers

Kay Ewbank

Database developer and productivity expert Kay Ewbank offers help with office applications.

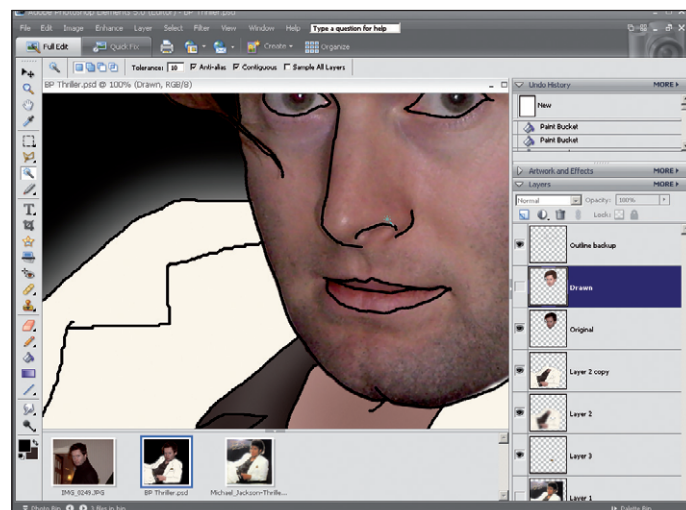


Ben Pitt

Professional musician and keen photographer Ben Pitt gives advice on using creative software.



softwarehelp@computershopper.co.uk



◀ Trace over a photo montage to create your own caricature illustration

Create Access subreports

Q I have a Microsoft Access database that looks similar to the one below. I have a report showing the details from this database and, below that, more boxes for the meeting details. I want the report to show the information per customer: first the contract details for that customer, then all the meeting details for that customer. At the moment, it shows one detail of the contract, then one detail of a meeting, then another detail of the contract, and so on. I've spent some time fiddling with the grouping and sorting, but I can't get the effect I want.

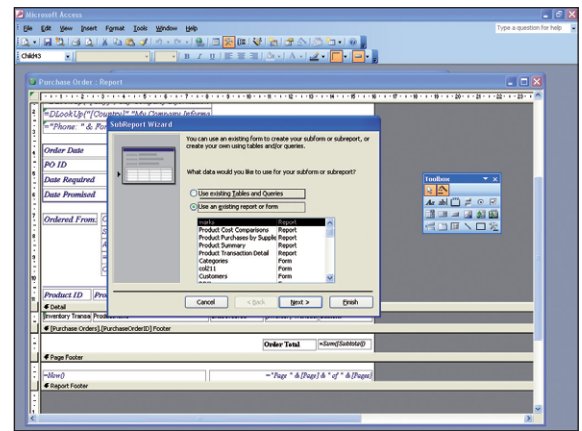
Andrew Charlton

A Before giving you an answer, I'd say that if you are using a single table for all this information, you haven't normalised your database. What you are treating as a single large 'flat' structure is in fact at least three tables: a main customer table and two related tables, one holding contract details and the other meeting details. I can't tell from your sample data whether the meeting details relate to a particular contract or to the customer in general, but if

Customer	Rep	Contract Type	Meeting Date	Meeting Action
Shopper	Tom	Single	10/05/07	planning
Buyer	Dick	Monthly	12/05/07	requote
Shopper	Harry	Monthly	03/06/07	presentation

they are linked to a particular contract, your structure should be customers – contracts – meetings. It would be much easier to maintain data integrity if you got the table structures right.

Given the situation you're in now, and even once you've sorted out your data structures, the solution is to use subreports. Create one subreport that holds the details for the contracts, and another that shows the meeting details. You then include both subreports in your main report, and that will show the information grouped by customer. To add a subreport to an existing report, you can use the wizard in Access, or drag and drop the report from the Database window to your main report. Access will then synchronise the main report and subreport, as long as you have defined the relationships for the tables or the tables on which the queries used in the reports are based. It will also synchronise the report as long as the report in your main table has a primary key, and the subreport has a field with the same name as the primary key. **KE**



▲ Add a subreport to a main report to see blocks of data that are relevant to one customer

Enter data automatically

Q I have a data form in which the records usually hold similar data, and I want to set it up so that it automatically shows the data entered in the previous record. I know I can press the Ctrl and ' keys together to copy the data from the previous record, but I'd like to have the data entered automatically.

G Singh

A If you add the data automatically, you run a very great risk of storing the wrong data, because people won't notice that it is wrong and needs changing. However, as long as you bear this in mind, you could add some code to the After Update event on your form to set the default value of the controls to the current value. For example, if you have textboxes on your form called Firstname and Lastname, you could use the following code:

```
Private Sub Form_AfterUpdate()  
    Me.firstname.DefaultValue = "=" &  
    Chr(34) & Me.firstname & Chr(34)  
    Me.lastname.DefaultValue = "=" &  
    Chr(34) & Me.lastname & Chr(34)  
End Sub
```

Chr(34) is the double-quote character. I must repeat, though, that setting default values for every field is very dangerous and you will almost certainly end up with records that hold incorrect information. **KE**

Store a person's initial

Q I'm storing names in a table in Access, and one of the fields stores the person's forename. I've got another field in which I want to store the initials, so if the forename is Alfred, I want the initial field to contain A. The table has a lot of records in it, so I need some way of doing this automatically.

D. Wright

A If you really need to store the initial, you can do it by setting up an update query. Create a new query in design view, and add your table to the query. Make sure the Initial field and the Forename field are both added to the query. In the criteria area of the query, enter:

Is Not Null

in the forename column. Next, select Update query from the Query menu. Then enter:

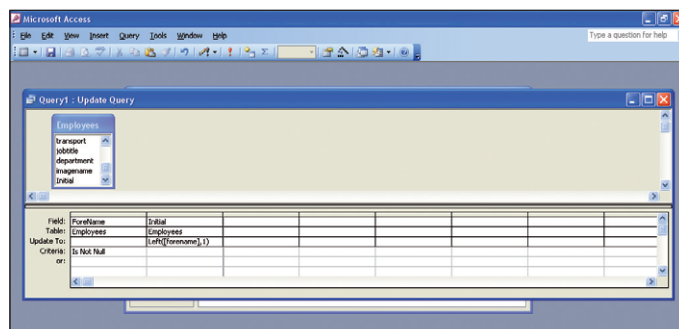
Left([Forename],1)

in the Update To row in the Initial column. If you now run your query, you should set the Initial field to hold the initial letter of the forename.

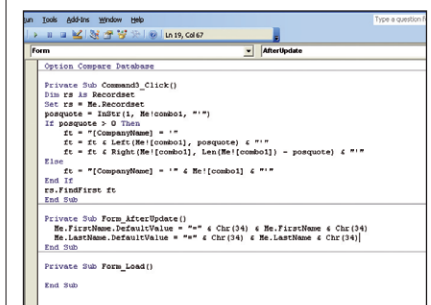
It's important that you back up your table before running the update query just in case you make a mistake and lose some of your data. This could be a real problem because you can't undo an update query.

However, I'm not sure why you actually need to store the initial as a field in your database. Anywhere you need it, you can simply get it using:

=Left([forename],1) **KE**



◀ Use an Update query to set values in a table

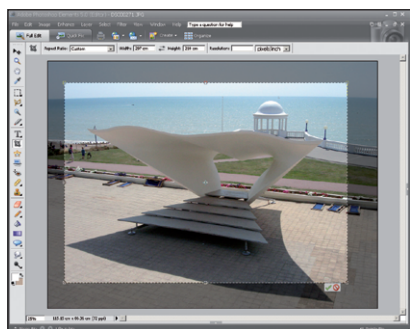


▲ You can set default values for forms, but mistakes are almost inevitable

I can't get a certain ratio

Q My digital camera produces files that are 2,160x1,440 pixels in size, giving an aspect ratio of 3:2. I print them using Epson PhotoQuicker software, usually fitting two or four pictures on an A4 page. These prints have an aspect ratio of $\sqrt{2}:1$, or about 1.4:1, which is annoyingly irrational (in the mathematical sense).

Before printing I almost invariably crop my pictures, mostly to remove unwanted dross,



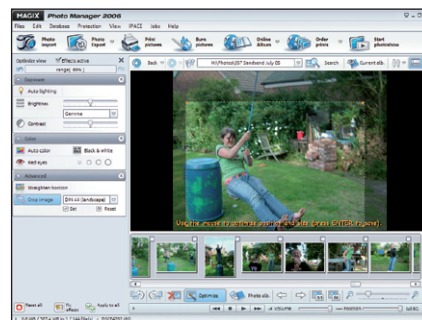
▲ ACDSee Photo Manager and Adobe Photoshop Elements (shown here) allow you to type in your desired aspect ratio manually

but also to try to match the file and printer aspect ratios. PhotoQuicker lets me drag out a rectangle to define the crop area. Getting this to be 1.4:1 by hand and eye is, of course, impossible, so once I know the likely height of the crop, say, I usually fire up a spreadsheet and calculate the relevant widths for a range of heights in the region of my guess. Then I keep trying crops until I get one I like the look of, and which is as close as I can get to the target aspect ratio.

Is there any software that will let me specify an aspect ratio, drag out a rectangle to that ratio, move it around the picture, resize as necessary and continue moving and resizing at the constant aspect ratio until I'm happy and ready to perform the actual crop?

Steve Webb

A Quite a few applications allow you to crop at a fixed aspect ratio, but surprisingly few include A4 among their presets. Of the photo-management software in our group test on page 129, the only free one to offer this is Magix Photo Manager 2006, although sadly it doesn't have much else going for it. Our



▲ Magix Photo Manager 2006 is a fairly unwieldy application but it does include a preset for cropping pictures to A4 aspect ratio

favourite free photo manager, Picasa, has a 13:18 preset, which is just 6mm shy of being the same as A4. You may find that this is close enough to get the job done satisfactorily. If you're willing to spend some money, ACDSee Photo Manager offers a custom option that lets you type in an aspect ratio. It doesn't support decimal points, so you'll need to type 297 and 210 to achieve an A4 shape – these are A4 paper's dimensions in millimetres. Adobe Photoshop Elements has a similar option – select the Crop tool, then type 297 and 210 into the Width and Height fields. **BP**

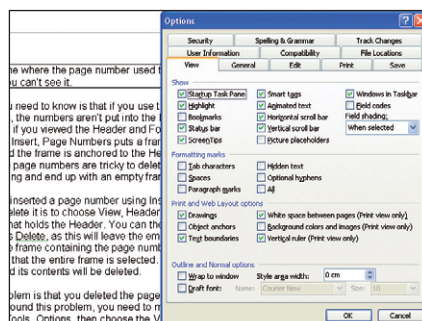
Documents are always indented

Q I have a problem with a document in Word 2003. The text at the top of every single page is indented. My paragraph style doesn't have an indent, and no other paragraphs on the page are indented. I've looked through the options for setting the page format, but I can't see what I've done wrong. Please help.

P Cuthbertson

A The most likely reason for this is that you had a page number at the top of the page at some point, but have since deleted it. This can leave an empty frame where the page number used to be, which you can't see, but which interferes with your text.

If you use the menu option Insert, Page Numbers, Word doesn't put the numbers into the Header or Footer sections as it would if you viewed the Header and Footer then chose



▲ Select the 'Text boundaries' option to track down empty frames

Insert Page Number. Instead, Insert, Page Numbers places a frame on the normal area of the page and anchors it to the Header or Footer. The problem is that these page numbers are tricky to delete properly, and it's easy to do the wrong thing and end up with an empty frame.

If you've inserted a page number using Insert, Page Numbers, you can delete it by choosing View, Header and Footer, which allows you to see the section that holds the Header. Now you can select the page number, but don't just press the Delete key, as this will delete only the number and leave the empty frame behind. Instead, click inside the frame that contains the page number, then click on the border of the frame to select the entire frame. Now you can press Delete and the frame and its contents will be deleted.

Your problem is that you deleted the page number and left the empty frame. To get around this in future, you need to make the frame visible. Choose Tools, Options and select the View tab from the dialog box that appears. Put a check mark in the box labelled 'Text boundaries'. Now when you view the top of your page, you should see a dotted line around the empty frame. You can select this and delete it. **KE**

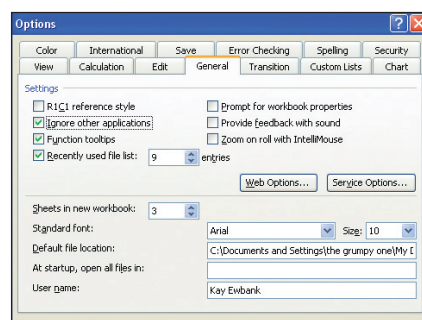
Excel files won't open

Q I have a problem with Excel. If I open a .xls file by double-clicking it in My Documents, I get an error message saying that the file is already open. But it is not already open, and I don't get the same message if I open the same file from within Excel. The same method works for opening Word files, and I never used to have this problem with Excel until a few months ago. When the files are open, I can use them quite normally. Can you help?

Peter White

A This problem can occur for a number of reasons. The first thing to try is to choose Options from the Tools menu. On the General tab, untick the box labelled 'Ignore other Applications'. This stops applications exchanging data using Dynamic Data Exchange (DDE), which has been blamed for some instances of this problem.

The second option is to re-register Excel in the Registry, as the problem can occur if Excel isn't recognised correctly. From the Start menu, choose Run, then type excel.exe /regserver. **KE**



▲ Set Excel to ignore other applications to avoid DDE-related problems

Word styles make no sense

Q I find Word's paragraph styles very confusing. If I decide to change a paragraph style from Heading 3 to Normal, for example, I can select Normal from the drop-down list of styles, but the format still shows as Heading 3. Why does this happen?

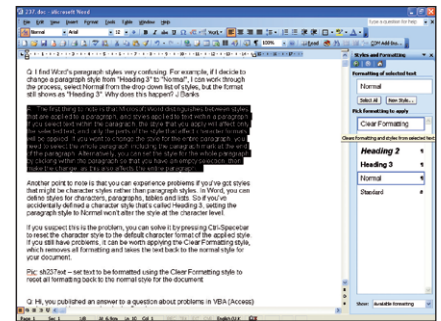
J Banks

A The first thing to note is that Microsoft Word distinguishes between styles that are applied to paragraphs, and styles applied to text within a paragraph. If you select some text within the paragraph, any style you apply will affect only the selected text, and Word applies only the parts of the style that affect character formats. If you want to change the style for the entire paragraph, you need to select the

whole paragraph including the paragraph mark at the end. This is usually invisible, but you can reveal it by clicking on the ¶ icon in the toolbar. Alternatively, you can set the style for the whole paragraph by clicking within it so you have an empty selection, then making the change.

You may also experience problems if you try to use character styles when you should be using paragraph styles. In Word, you can define styles for characters, paragraphs, tables and lists. So if you've accidentally defined a character style that's called Heading 3, setting the paragraph style to Normal won't alter the style at the character level.

If you suspect this is the problem, you can solve it by pressing Ctrl-Spacebar to reset the character style to the default character format of the applied style. If you're still having problems,



▲ Use the Clear Formatting style from the Styles and Formatting menu to reset all formatting to the Normal style for your document

try applying the Clear Formatting style, which removes all formatting and returns the text to the normal style for your document. **KE**

Feedback Toolbar Trouble

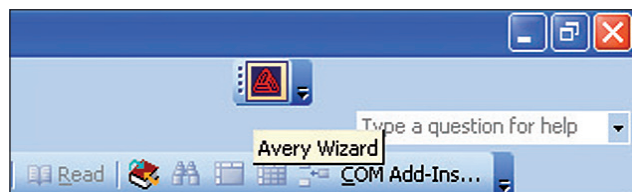
Q In the November issue of *Computer Shopper*, we asked if any readers had managed to find a way of preventing the Avery Label Wizard positioning itself on a new blank line of the Excel toolbar. The problem, as reported by *Shopper* reader Dr Richard Grant, is that the Avery single-button toolbar always appears on a third toolbar line, despite the fact that there's plenty space on the second line. This reduces the spreadsheet area for no good reason. It's possible to move the Avery button up to the empty space on the second toolbar line, but it moves back every time Excel is closed then re-opened.

A A reader signing themselves 'clearly mad' has a solution that works for both Excel and Outlook. First, you need to move the Avery Wizard icon to the

spot you'd like it to occupy on the toolbar. Next, create a couple of fields and add some data. Highlight the data, and click on the Avery Wizard icon. Once the wizard has opened, click Next, then click Cancel to exit the wizard. Close Excel, and when you re-open it the button will still be in the correct place.

A similar technique overcomes the same problem in Outlook. In this case, you move the Avery icon to where you want it, then go to your Contacts folder, highlight some of the contacts and click on the Avery Wizard icon to start the wizard. Click Next, then Cancel to exit the wizard. Close Outlook and, again, when you re-open it the button should still be in the right place.

However, despite the success of this solution, I'd be tempted to uninstall the Avery Wizard. It adds to the overhead when opening Word or Excel, and you can achieve much the same results with Word's label printing facilities. **KE**



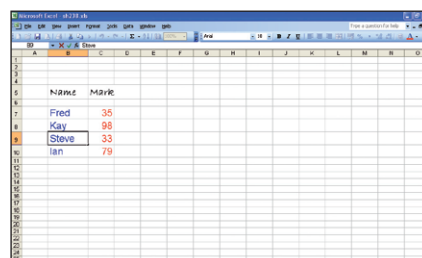
◀ The Avery Label Wizard has a mind of its own on where its toolbar should be

Keep Excel formatting

Q I want to paste data into Excel from other applications, while keeping the formatting as it's set in Excel. Is there any way to do this?

M Green

A This is very easy to achieve, as long as you're pasting information into a single cell. All you need to do is double-click on the cell in Excel before you paste the content, and you'll keep the formatting you've set in Excel. **KE**



▲ You can retain Excel's formatting by double-clicking before pasting new data

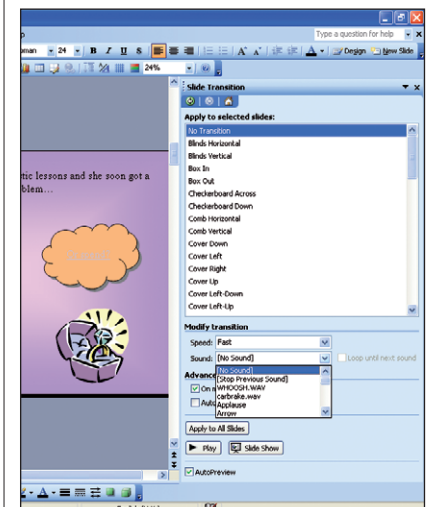
Annoying PowerPoint

Q I've got a PowerPoint presentation that plays music, and it's driving me mad. I didn't create the presentation, but I need to show it quite regularly. How do I get rid of the muzak?

P Evans

A How you get rid of the music depends on how it was added in the first place. First, go to the slide where the music starts and look for a speaker icon. Many people place this off to the side of the slide to stop it spoiling the appearance, so reduce the view size for the slide to 50 per cent to see if the speaker is lurking there.

If not, the music may have been added as part of a slide transition. To see whether this is the case, choose Slide Show, Slide Transition. Choose Modify transition and, in the box for Sound, use the drop-down arrow to see the sound options. The one you want is No Sound. **KE**



▲ Choose No Sound in PowerPoint to avoid being driven mad by muzak in your slideshow